1: Gorer J-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

I am aware that the use of interpreters is held to invalidate a great deal of anthropological work; but the Lepchas got used to Sukra Singh—a person of endless patience and constant good temper—as soon or sooner than they did to us, and I question whether his absence would have made for any greater intimacy. I was never really dependent on him, and, without his slowing up the pace of conversation, I could never have got the almost word for word texts that I obtained. When he was not with me I found myself quite incapable of taking sufficiently full notes; and those I made from memory subsequently inevitably lacked the clearness and precision of those I took more normally. Unless I had invented some form of Lepcha shorthand or employed a dictaphone my work among the Lepchas would have been far less detailed; only when talking to children or to big groups was the presence of my interpreter useless or a hindrance.

I have put a few notes on the Lepcha language into an appendix[1] for the benefit of those who are interested in such matters and also a vocabulary of those Lepcha words which I have been forced to employ in the text. I have avoided using Lepcha words as far as possible, and have given no Lepcha texts; I am unable to understand the reasoning of those anthropologists who consider that the inclusion in an English book of sentences in a language which not one reader can understand gives the study greater scientific or objective value. My own feeling is that the value of texts is almost entirely linguistic; and so for the use of philologists I propose to deposit a few selected texts (stories and prayers) with my Lepcha vocabulary with the School of Oriental Languages, London.

I lived in Zongu among the Lepchas during March, April and May 1937. Frequently in this book, in order to avoid clumsiness, I have used the present tense and referred to different periods as 'now', 'three months ago', 'ten years ago.' In all cases the point of reference from which time is measured is the spring of 1937.

In India and Sikkim I received kindness and help from so many people that it is difficult even to enumerate them all. The many people who have experienced the great and unfailing kindness and hospitality of Mr. and Mrs. Norman Odling of Kalimpong will understand that I can find no words to express my gratitude to them; you cannot thank people who have given you a home. I should also like to thank very sincerely His Highness Sir Tashi Namgyal, K.C.I.E., Maharajah of Sikkim, for his kindness and

[1] See Appendix VI.

1: Gorer J-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

-operation; and also Rai Sahib, Tashi Dadul, the Private Secretary of His Highness, Rai Sahib, Sonam Dadul, Rhennock Kazi and ficial Steward in charge of Palace affairs; the Honourable Mary cott, D.D., of Gangtok, and the Very Reverend Dr. J. A. Graham, .I.E., D.D., of Kalimpong, all of whom gave me much help and lvice. My thanks are also due to Sukra Singh for his unfailing tience and good temper in situations which would have dis- ncerted many more sophisticated people.

I have attempted within a single volume to give an adequate escription of Lepcha society and in particular of the village of ingthem; to avoid undue length I have had to suppress a con- derable amount of minor detail, but I hope that I have done this ithout obscuring or falsifying any facts. The religions I have in rticular dealt with very summarily, for a full treatment would quire a second volume comparable in size to this one, and would eavily overweight the picture I am trying to present. The volume divided into three books, each of which represents to some extent different method of description; in Book One I have presented he material and formalised aspects of Lepcha society, in Book wo the mainly unformalised aspects of Lepcha life, and in Book hree the history of certain individuals. I have tried to make a otal picture by presenting three view-points: the frame-work of he society, the impact of the culture on the people, and the indi- iduals who are the product of that culture and society. I have mployed, to the best of my ability, the various disciplines, nthropological and psychological, functional and Freudian, which eemed apposite to the aim I had in mind; I have used them clectically, for most of the disciplines seem to me useful and none f them completely adequate alone. My methods of working and ny attitude to various aspects of anthropology are described in ppropriate places in the text, particularly in Chapters Ten and eventeen. In Chapter Seventeen I have attempted to answer ome of the problems raised by my study of the Lepchas.

It has seemed to me that many sociological works appear to eglect the individuals who compose the societies they are de- cribing; in so far as I claim any novelty in the treatment of the ubject-matter of this book, it is in the fact that I have let the Lepchas speak for themselves, that I have tried not to forget that he village of Lingthem is inhabited by one hundred and seventy-six ersons, and the reserve of Zongu by about two thousand. I have ried to illustrate every statement from the lives of the people of

1: Gorer J-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

CHAPTER SEVEN

RELIGION I: LAMAISM

[Lamaism, or, as it is sometimes called, Mahayana Buddhism, is a subject of the greatest complexity, to the study of which scholars of world-wide repute have devoted their whole lives. Its organisation is as elaborate as that of the medieval Catholic church, its hagiology, demonology and ritual are infinitely more complicated, and it is split into nearly as many sub-sects as contemporary Christianity. My ignorance of Tibetan prevents me discussing it in any great detail. Among the Lepchas of Zongu the practices of lamaism present more variety of detail than any other single facet of their lives; my notes on lamaist ritual far exceed those on any other subject. I had at one moment considered comparing the lamaism as I saw it practised in Lingthem with the accounts given by other people of more orthodox practices in unmixed lamaist communities, but even confining myself to those rites at which I was present, I soon discovered that the bulk of the material involved would be out of all proportion to its place in the social and religious life of the Lepchas. I have therefore limited myself to a generalised account of the impact of lamaism on the life of the Lepchas of Zongu; in practically no instances have I given the details of ritual or of the fabrication of ritual objects, not because I do not know them, but because they would overweight what is from my point of view a subsidiary subject. To a lesser degree these remarks also apply to the rituals of the Mun and to the extremely elaborate mythology and folklore derived from both religions. Possibly in the future (I hope with the collaboration of Mr. C. J. Morris) I may publish the full details of the ritual and belief of both religions in a different work.]

i

The discussion of the Lepchas' religion is rendered extremely complicated by the fact that they practise simultaneously, and without any feeling of theoretical discomfort, two (or possibly three) mutually contradictory religions: of these the older Lepcha

1: Gorer J-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

DEVIANTS AND DEFECTIVES

i

Except when I have used individual illustrations the four chapters of Book Two have been written about an abstraction called 'the average Lepcha'. Of course such an abstraction has no more real existence than 'the average man' or 'the man in the street' dear to European and American journalists; he is a compromise between the ideal personality set up for the Lepchas by themselves and the observable behaviour of the majority of the Lepchas in Lingthem. It is the Lepcha stereotype who has been described.

The Lepcha stereotype is unaggressive, sociable, hard-working, constantly good-humoured, greatly interested in direct consumption (eating, drinking and copulation), fundamentally optimistic. The relationship of the Lepcha stereotype with his fellows is based rationally on mutual benefits and obligations; very little stress is placed on personal affection and practically no interest is taken in, and no allowance made for, individual character or temperament. The Lepcha insists very firmly on the independence of the adult individual and the family group; no attempt is made to dominate or exploit others, and any attempt by others to dominate or exploit is resisted as actively as the rules of the culture permit. The Lepcha identifies himself strongly with his family group and with his immediate community—the village; the identification with the tribe as a whole is much less strong, and one of the Lepchas' chief social weaknesses is that, except in the case of serious crime, the Mandal and inhabitants of one village have little influence over the inhabitants of any other village under a different Mandal. The Lepcha stereotype calls for a very gradual emergence of responsibility and almost unquestioning confidence from younger people in their elders.

Although this stereotype does not, I think, correspond exactly to the behaviour or attitudes of any one person, it is not for that

1: Gorer J-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

reason valueless. It represents the ideal towards which the Lepchas strive and to which they attempt to mould their children, and it is in the deviations from this imposed stereotype that the greater number of psychological difficulties for the Lepchas arise. As such it has preponderating weight in the formation of individual character, and constitutes a point of reference from which deviation can be measured.

Deviations fall into two groups, negative and positive; people may lack some characteristic or qualification called for by the cultural stereotype; or they may manifest characteristics and types of behaviour which exaggerate cultural characteristics, or they may have temperamental qualities definitely opposed to the cultural stereotype. Judged by such rigorous standards there is probably nobody who is not slightly deviant. There are, however, two people in Lingthem, Chala Mandal and Tafoor, in whom I could discern no temperamental cause for psychological discomfort. Both had reasons for a certain distress, but they were external ones; the Mandal was unhappy because he had no son, Tafoor, I think, slightly disappointed because he had neither the wealth nor position of his late father the Muktair. These two people practically embodied the Lepcha ideal, the Mandal for the layman and Tafoor for the lama; Tafoor's household also approached more nearly than any other to the Lepcha ideal.

Owing to the Lepchas' great tolerance of—or rather indifference, to—shades of character, the maladjusted tend to be sociotic[1] rather than neurotic deviants. The only temperament type to which the Lepchas manifest constant opposition is the aggressive and domineering personality; the person who wishes to domineer or to command is constantly thwarted; to paraphrase Saki's epigram, there may be people born to command among the Lepchas, but they never find anybody born to obey them. The most outstanding of these aggressive characters were Tempa, who was described in Chapter Five,[2] and Kurma, whose story is given at length in the next chapter. It is worth noting that these two are also sociotically maladjusted; Tempa is a foreigner from outside Zongu, reared in a mixed community, and living under the slightly humiliating condition of resident son-in-law (*komok myok*); Kurma was adopted by an elderly couple as a little boy, was very unhappy

[1] This term was first used by Dr. Moreno to distinguish socially maladjusted from temperamentally maladjusted people.

[2] See pp. 124–126.

1: Gorer J-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

Lingthem were or had been adopted; and Kurma is unique in having completely abandoned his adopting parents to return to his biological parents. Again as a person with two elder brothers Kurma is unusual in having become head of the household at an early age and in having had the heavy economic burden of seven funerals in a fairly short stretch of time.[4] He is also unusual in having started with an irregular sexual union, and extremely unfortunate in the mortality of his wives.

Nevertheless, despite his unusual character and circumstances, I believe that Kurma's life-story, incomplete though it is, gives a good illustration of the dynamic workings of Lepcha culture and an adequate cross-section view of Lepcha society. By developing the themes which he touches on,[5] sometimes very cursorily, one would have an almost complete picture of Lepcha social arrangements; if it were not for the awkwardness of such an arrangement, all the preceding chapters of this book could be used as amplification for Kurma's story.

I am giving the notes in the form in which I took them. The portions in quotation marks are nearly *verbatim* transcriptions; I could not, however, always write quickly enough to take down every word, and I have omitted the repetitions which swell out all Lepcha stories. The portions told in the third person are chiefly incidents which cropped up in the discussion of other matters.

Although I have not altered the notes in any way I am presenting them in more or less historical order, which is not that in which the information was given to me. To simplify reading I am giving cross-headings, and a few explanatory notes. For those points in his narrative on which I questioned other people and on which their versions differed considerably from Kurma's I have presented the alternative versions in brackets and italics. For ease of reference I am also giving overleaf a calendar of the more or less well-established dates in Kurma's life and the names and dates of birth and death of his immediate family. To bring his story up to date I have put after his narrative a journal of his doings during the period when I was observing him.

[4] The only people in Lingthem similarly circumstanced were Nariya and Rigya, and they were economically far better able to stand the strain.

[5] I have omitted in the following pages all the impersonal material (ceremonies, etc.) which Kurma incorporated in his story.

7: Hooker D-5 (1849-1851) 1854
AK5 Lepcha AK5

Before proceeding to narrate my different expeditions into
Sikkim and Nepal from Dorjiling, I shall give a sketch of 128
the different peoples and races composing the heterogeneous population of Sikkim and the neighbouring mountains.

The Lepcha is the aboriginal inhabitant of Sikkim, and 101
the prominent character in Dorjiling, where he undertakes 144
all sorts of out-door employment. The race to which he belongs is a very singular one; markedly Mongolian in features, and a good deal too, by imitation, in habit; still he differs from his Tibetan prototype, though not so decidedly as from the Nepalese and Bhotanese, between whom he is hemmed into a narrow tract of mountain country, barely 60 miles in breadth. The Lepchas possess 773
a tradition of the flood, during which a couple escaped to the top of a mountain (Tendong) near Dorjiling. The 173
earliest traditions which they have of their history date no further back than some three hundred years, when they describe themselves as having been long-haired, half-clad savages. At about that period they were visited by Tibetans, who introduced Boodh worship, the platting of their hair into pig-tails, and very many of their own customs. Their physiognomy is however so Tibetan in its 174
character, that it cannot be supposed that this was their earliest intercourse with the trans-nivean races: whether they may have wandered from beyond the snows before the spread of Boodhism and its civilisation, or whether they are a cross between the Tamulian of India and the Tibetan, has not been decided. Their language, though [197]
radically identical with Tibetan, differs from it in many 619
important particulars. They, or at least some of their 173
tribes, call themselves Rong, and Arratt, and their country Dijong: they once possessed a great part of East Nepal, as far west as the Tambur river, and at a still earlier period they penetrated as far west as the Arun river.